



Bedford Public Library System

Serving Our Community Since 1900

321 North Bridge Street
Bedford, VA 24523
www.bplsonline.org

10/26/2017

In the Matter of:

Wireline Competition Bureau) WC Docket No. 13-184
Seeking Comments on E-rate Category Two)

The Bedford Public Library System is pleased to provide reply comments on the impact of having access to secure and sufficient funding for our library WiFi and internal connections. We echo the call to the FCC of more than 140 libraries to ensure a fully funded and stable E-rate program, including maintaining the category two (C2) budget system for libraries.

The Bedford Public Library in the small community of Bedford, VA has filed for C2 services for a few years since the modernization order and we plan to file for C2 services this year too. We have 6 buildings with three of them in very remote corners of Bedford County. People in these remote areas of the County often do not have access (affordable or otherwise) to high speed Internet at their homes and rely on the Library's connection to do simple tasks like filing their income taxes through the IRS online or renewing their car registration through the DMV online. Online access to these types of government services, in particular, are essential in today's society.

People use our free wifi services for job seeking, for fact checking, for catching up with relatives in far-away places, for downloading books, for creating websites, for research, for pleasure and as a necessity for maintaining an informed and engaged citizenry. All this depends on a strong wifi signal.

We depend on the E-rate C2 program to provide reimbursement for our equipment costs, as each building must have (at a minimum), three pieces of expensive and finite networking equipment to make up our WAN. I think it would be different if we could have a "one and done system", but this equipment has to be replaced every 3-5 years. We are able to come up with a concrete replacement regiment because we have access to the C2 funding now.

One issue we have just recently begun to address is that the technology is changing so quickly that our existing wiring in these 20 year old buildings is now outdated and must be replaced with newer Cat-6 cabling. Without the cabling, there is no wifi available to the public.

Before the E-rate Modernization in 2014, virtually no libraries received funds for then, Priority 2 services. My comments filed in response to this Public Notice show that libraries, like mine, are taking advantage of the C2 funding made available through the Modernization. We support the points made by the American Library Association (ALA) that underscore that it is premature for the FCC to make changes to the budget system given that we are midstream in the five-year C2 system. We also support the recommendations made by ALA to make it easier and more streamlined for libraries to apply for C2 funding.

With the commitment of the FCC to ensure a library budget of \$2.30 (\$5.00 for a selected category of larger urban and suburban libraries) per square foot, libraries can finally upgrade outdated equipment or plan for new construction. They have confidence that desperately needed support will be there.

It is clear from library comments filed, that the FCC should maintain secure funding through the full five-year budget period as adopted during the 2014 Modernization. Our communities depend on that funding.

Jenny Novalis, Director
Bedford Public Library System
Bedford, VA